

Paul's ministry at Ephesus

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[0 : 00] Let us turn now to the chapter we read in the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 19.

And read, at the beginning came to pass, while Apollos had current, Paul, having passed to the upper coasts, came to Ephesus. So I want to consider with you, continuing our studies in Acts, this chapter, as it tells us something of Paul's ministry in Ephesus, a ministry that lasted for nearly three years.

Now, last Sabbath evening we considered Paul at Athens, in chapter 17.

And the reason why I'm not dealing with chapter 18 is that it tells us of Paul's ministry in Corinth, but it doesn't fill in the details.

Paul's ministry in Corinth would be better studied in the light of 1 Corinthians in particular. And that, of course, would be a study on its own and in the providence of God, who knows one day, but we may attempt that.

[1 : 34] While he was, or after he was in Corinth, Paul made his way back to Jerusalem. All we're told about that is that he was constrained to do so for some reason that the Bible doesn't enlighten us on.

He was obligated to perform a vow in Jerusalem. And so, after a period of time, he left Corinth and made his way to Jerusalem.

And after he had met that obligation, he again set out from Antioch on what was to become the third missionary journey.

And that journey, as I said, beginning at Antioch, took him again into the regions of Galatia.

And from there he came to this great city of Ephesus. And thus fulfilling, as we shall see, a great desire that he had to evangelize that city.

[2 : 56] As you probably know, Ephesus was a great commercial and administrative city, full of the business business life associated with a city of that kind.

For three years, Paul ministered there. And it became a very important part of his apostolic ministry. And it has been said that the Christianizing of the province, of this province of Asia, was carried out so thoroughly that for centuries, the churches of Asia were amongst the most influential in the world.

The account that is given to us of Paul's ministry in Ephesus is given in a series of pictures.

Someone has put it like this, that Luke, the historian, who gives us this account, is like a narrator, a speaker, who uses slides to do most of his narrating for him.

And he shows one picture after another, and he throws one picture after another on the screen, and provides coherence by the few well-chosen words of summary which he inserts between each picture.

[4 : 33] And there are four such pictures in this chapter, giving us an account of a minister that lasted for three years. We have, first of all, the account of the twelve disciples at Ephesus.

And then we have an account of, and a very typical account, of what happened when Paul was put out of the synagogue after three months.

And then we have an account of his confrontation with the occult. And then we have an account of his account. And then we have an account of his fourth picture, and mainly this will take up our time tonight, the riotous assembly at Ephesus.

And you will notice that all these things, all these pictures, all these confrontations, all these accounts, are inseparably connected with Paul's purpose in Ephesus.

And it's important in any study of the book of Acts, to remember what that purpose was. It was to evangelise by the preaching of the word, the areas into which he went.

[6 : 00] Well, we read here that, as he came to Ephesus, he met twelve men. And they were referred to as disciples, to whom he said, Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost, and so on. Now, this is a very interesting and a very important meeting between Paul and these twelve men.

Some of the young Christian people here tonight may recognise the importance of this meeting from this point of view. Certainly, as you read there, as you have it in verse two, have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed?

Perhaps you have encountered already, if not, you will one of these days come across the teaching that suggests, and not only suggests, but states, that you're a second-rate Christian until you get this second blessing.

You know, there are people who teach that it isn't just enough to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. You have to live in a higher plane, and you can live in a higher plane, and that it is possible to live in a higher plane.

[7 : 30] And that which is going to make it possible for you to live in a higher plane, is to receive this blessing of the Holy Spirit after you believe.

And that teaching very often is based upon this verse. Now, unfortunately, the argument is lost, when it's based upon this verse, for the simple reason that the word since shouldn't be in that verse at all.

The verse should read, Have you received, or did you receive the Holy Ghost, when you believed? Not since you believed.

So, this very interesting account tells us nothing at all about the second blessing. It isn't a verse that teaches that the second blessing is either necessary or possible.

It has nothing to say to us about the second blessing. And it may interest you to know that one very exercised and gifted minister in past generations, who was once asked the question, Do you believe in the second blessing?

[8 : 49] He replied in this way, Yes, he said, I do. And in the third, and the fourth, and the fifth. You see, the thing is that once you enter into the blessing of God by the Holy Spirit, you are entering upon a life in which the Holy Spirit is going to minister continuously to you.

Remember the words of Jesus, If any man thirsts, and that includes the Christian, who has been blessed, If any man thirsts, let him come unto me and drink.

You see, the life of blessing is a life in which you constantly, continuously, keep coming to the source from which you are going to drink the blessing that God communicates through faith in Jesus Christ.

So you see, this passage has nothing to say to you about the second blessing, even if you believe in it. As such. It is difficult really to understand what situation or what condition spiritually these twelve men were in.

It is possible, we do know here, that they were disciples of Apollos, and we know that Apollos was by this time in Corinth. Apollos was a product of the ministry of John the Baptist, as were these twelve men.

[10 : 21] Now, as Paul questions, then one or two things come to light. First of all this, they were totally ignorant of the meaning of Paul's question, Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?

And so this seems to indicate to us that they were the kind of people who are groping in the dark, people who are influenced by the truth, but yet who have no clear understanding of the way of salvation.

You know, there are people like that. You may be like that here tonight. Your life may be in the midst of the gospel to the extent that. You know that you need something they don't have.

You may not know what that is. And you may not even know how to get it. And perhaps your very efforts are coming between you and your reception of what God is offering to you.

And what you need is light, understanding. So this is what Paul does to these men. He answers, they answer, We haven't heard of the Holy Spirit. Now this may mean that they had not heard of the Holy Spirit himself, or that they may not have heard or understood the meaning of the coming of the Holy Spirit.

[11 : 44] And he said unto them, What then were you baptized to? What did you believe when you were baptized? Oh, John's baptism. What was John's baptism? It was the baptism of repentance.

So you see, to that extent, these men had become followers or disciples. To that extent, they were religious. To that extent, they had maybe broken with an old way of life and were groping for something new.

So Paul, what does he do? Well, Paul then explains to them what John's ministry was all about. John, he says, Baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on him who should come after him.

That is in Jesus Christ. Now what Paul did was this. He explained to them the gospel. That's all he did. He explained to them the connection between the ministry of John the Baptist and the coming of Jesus.

He explained to them why Jesus came. He explained to them how they needed to believe. And he explained to them how they could believe. And when they heard that, they were baptized into the name of Jesus Christ.

[12 : 51] That is, when they believed what he said, then they were baptized. And by the way, this is the only instance, I think, in the New Testament of a re-baptism or of a second baptism with water.

And this again is instructive in that it suggests to us that the baptism that they had received before was not Christian baptism. It was the baptism of John the Baptist, preparing them for the Christian way, or for the Christian message, or for the Christian faith.

And once they understood the message, and once they believed it fully, then they received the privilege of baptism into the name of Jesus, confessing that Christ was their Lord.

And when they were baptized, Paul laid his hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Now here again is something very interesting.

You know that the laying on of hands signifies the transmission of something as a result of the laying on of hands.

[14 : 02] And what was transmitted to them was this, the Holy Ghost, and the gift of tongues, and the gift of prophecy. And notice that it was only when the apostles laid their hands on people that this happened.

Only when the apostles did it. That it happened. And it didn't happen very often. It only happened on two or three occasions in the New Testament church. And it always happened when people were being brought in to the New Testament church from outside.

People who were not in the Christian church before then. And the miraculous gifts that these men were given, the gift of tongues speaking and prophecy, were gifts which were given to them by God so that the apostles' authority would be attested.

Now it's a pity that we couldn't stop at this incident for a wee bit longer because it's very important today. Because you and I are living in a day when there is a phenomenal growth in Pentecostalism and in the charismatic movement.

A phenomenal growth. And when great emphasis laid upon the kind of thing I mentioned before, the second blessing, speaking in tongues, the gift of prophecy and the gift of healing and so on.

[15 : 25] Tremendous emphasis is laid upon these things. To the detriment of, I fully believe, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation.

What you and I need tonight, above all this, is not the second blessing, but the blessing of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And what you and I need to remember also is this, in the light of the New Testament teaching, that there can be no such thing as a Christian without the Holy Spirit.

There is no such thing as faith in Jesus without the Holy Spirit. You cannot believe unless the Spirit enables you to believe in the Lord Jesus.

And the other thing to remember is this, wherever there is faith in Christ, there the Holy Spirit abides. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

[16 : 27] And don't you be swept from your moorings by a lot of the nonsensical teaching that centres round, that lays, that gets so much emphasis from the movements that I have already referred to.

And I, for the life of me, cannot see why people should have to go out with the bounds of Reformed Christian churches for biblical teaching and a biblical ministry.

Is what we offer not enough? Or do you want, as someone's referred to it, the theology of more? And that is what is at the heart of a lot of Pentecostalism and a lot of the charismatic movement. More! As if faith in Christ and the gift of the Spirit weren't enough.

And shame on you, my friend, if you feel that you need more than what the Gospel of Christ, which has been handed down to you in and through this church for years.

[17:44] Shame on you if you think that you need more than what that Gospel offers you. Paul explained the ministry, Paul explained the Gospel to these men.

They believed and they received the Holy Spirit when they believed. The second picture we have here is a very typical one from verse 8 onwards.

The picture that you very often come across in the ministry in the history of Paul. He was put out to the synagogue. He went to the synagogue and he spoke boldly there for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the Kingdom of God.

That is, again, explaining the Gospel. Ministering the Gospel, talking about it, disputing, arguing, debating. about the things of God.

But people were opposed to Paul and the devil got in there and he used people. And he got rid of Paul from the synagogue and so Paul went to a lecture hall in Ephesus called the Hall of Tyrannus.

[18:53] And for over two years he lectured there where he'd hear every day to people who came to hear him. All they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus both Jews and Greeks.

And you know, here's a classic illustration for you of how stupid at times the devil can be. He used people, he used Jews to stir them up so that Paul would be thrown out of the synagogue.

The devil doesn't like the Gospel being preached. And he will do anything to stop it being preached.

And when the Gospel is being blessed he will try everything in his power to oppose the Gospel.

And he will be successful to all intents and purposes. He was successful and put Paul, he got him thrown out of the synagogue. But what happened? Paul found a lecture hall and for over two years he preached there to people whom he couldn't reach in the synagogue.

And the result was that the Gospel spread far wider than would have spread through the synagogue. The result was that more people heard it. So that we read here the Word of God multiplied, grew mightily and prevailed.

[20:07] You see the Lord is in the work of the Gospel though the devil is opposed to it and greater the sea that is with us and for us than they that are against us.

So Paul was brought to the synagogue. But the end project was that for two years he was able to preach the Gospel. You know what he said at that time?

He wrote a letter from Ephesus to the church at Corinth. This is what he said to them in chapter 16 of 1 Corinthians. Listen to this. Now he says, I hope to tally at Ephesus until Pentecost, that is till March.

For he says, a great door and effect is open unto me and there are many adversaries. Look at what he said. There are lots of people here opposing me.

I've got lots of enemies in this place. But the more the enemy, the greater the number of enemies, the greater the number of doors that open for the preaching of the Gospel. Don't you run away with the idea that the Gospel is only effective and the Gospel is only meaningful and the Gospel is only being blessed when there are no ripples on the water, when things are going well and when there is no opposition, when there are no enemies.

[21:21] That's when the Gospel is prevailing at all. It's when the devil gets on his hind legs in this world. It's when the devil uses so many forces and so many people from so many areas and attacks the Christian church for this, that and the next thing.

That's when the Gospel is being blessed and that's when you and I should be up and doing confronting the enemies of the cross.

Do you feel depressed when the Gospel is, when enemies stand up to oppose the Gospel? Do you feel depressed? I'm sure that there are times when we all do and yet other people don't feel depressed.

Other people rejoice because there they see the devil, he's annoyed, he's worried. And who knows what's happened in Ephesus that the very people the devil uses to oppose the Gospel will eventually turn out to be the greatest supporter of the Gospel.

There are people in this church tonight who are like that. There I know there are people here tonight who are like that. People who had no time for the Church or for the Bible or for the Gospel of Christ

or for Christians.

[22 : 34] People who had no time for the Lord's Day or for the sanctity of the Lord's Day. People maybe who are out of the way, I know there are who were out of their way deliberately to breach these laws.

Where are they tonight? Praying that sinners should be saved like themselves. This is what God does and this is what God did through Paul at Ephesus.

And that leads us to the third pick that comes up on the screen here. his confrontation with the occult. While he was there in Ephesus as he came in contact with various people he came in contact with people who were ill.

People whose minds were distorted. And the Lord worked wonderful miracles through Paul. It wasn't Paul it was the Lord. Verse 11 God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul.

no man can perform a miracle a miracle of grace it is God who does it. Even these miracles of healing that you come across from time to time.

[23 : 46] Who did it? The doctors? The medical profession? No but the Lord as the great physician using these as means to that end.

You and I are in his hand. And whatever great works are done they are done by the Lord. It pleases the Lord to use means.

So be it. It is the Lord who does it all. Remember what Paul said about himself and the great preacher Apollos? Paul may plant and Apollos water but God giveth the increase.

So the miracles were so wonderful that even when clothing was taken from Paul and they touched these people the evil spirits were out there.

And that's what the Bible says. We can't explain this. All we know is that God did it. And there's no limit to what God can do. this brought Paul into confrontation with the occult.

[24 : 50] There were certain people there in Ephesus who were prepared to jump on the bandwagon any bandwagon if it furred at their ends. The sort of mafia element of the Jewish area.

Seven sons of a man called Sceva a priest a Jewish priest. And they we read here were they were engaged in a kind of exorcism.

Ephesus at that time was a place which a lot of its derealized and a lot of its commercial life centered around the practices of the occult.

You and I cannot laugh at the power of evil. They're real. They are real. When you hear incidents of which are boards being used and incidents of the hands moving on these boards don't you laugh at these things.

Evil is a real power in our midst. The devil does have power. There is such a thing as the power of darkness. Paul said of this very place in Ephesus we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places.

[26 : 19] He was talking about Ephesus. He was writing to the church years after this reminding them and he himself said as well I fought he said with wild beasts in Ephesus.

What was that lions and tigers? There was probably language he was using metaphorically. His conflict with the world of evil and darkness and sin. It's an awful world that you and I live in.

An awful world. There are people in this world tonight whose minds are tormented by the presence of evil around them and within them. Darkness oppresses them.

Many are driven to the verge of despair and to suicide itself. Oh no my friend we cannot tamper with nor laugh at the forces of evil.

And so when these fellows saw that the gospel was prevailing in the lives of men and women they jumped on the bandwagon and instead of using the preaching of the gospel what did they use?

[27 : 28] They began to chant the name of Jesus above people who had evil spirits. They began to chant the name. We adjure you by the name of Jesus whom Paul preaches.

And this is one of these interesting and very difficult accounts difficult for us to understand when we speak about evil spirits men and women being possessed by evil spirits.

I must admit myself that I find it difficult to understand what this means. And I think that people who use these terms should be more careful when they do use them.

People they come across so many people who are possessed. Someone had this evil spirit and the next evil spirit. There is no doubt that these things were real.

these cases were real cases in the days of the apostles. There is no doubt at all about that.

Because when these men used the name of Jesus worried here that the evil spirits replied Paul I

know and Jesus I know but who are you?

[28 : 46] You see the sons of Sceva had no knowledge of Christ as saviour but they wanted to use the name of Christ to heal people so that they would earn more.

You see this was their trade this was their profession this was how they lined their pockets this is how they built up their bank balances. They used the power that they had.

This was their trade and their profession. But in this case the evil spirit leaped on them and they had to flee and this was known to all the Jews and fear fell on them all and many believed and confessed and showed their deeds.

Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together and burned them before all men and they counted the price of them 50,000 pieces of silver so mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

What's this? This is it. This is what it is. The gospel influenced the lives of men and women and influenced them to this extent.

[29 : 49] The influence was real. It was real. These men and women were concerned to bring everything at their hand all the things that they used in the practice of the occult and the practice of spiritism.

All the books and the catalogs that they had. They brought them all and they had a huge bonfire at Ephesus and the brighter that fire burnt the more it testified to the reality of their repentance that was in their lives.

This is what the gospel does. This is what you hear about so often when anyone becomes a believer, a Christian, he's a new creature. He doesn't stay the way he was with a new veneer over him, with a new dress or a new coat, a new suit.

He's new inside and what's inside comes out and things must go in his life. And as I said before I wish that we would emphasize that more and more in the Christian churches.

And this is what concerns me as I've said all too often about the Christianity of our day. There is enough of this in it. I fear that there isn't enough of this in the so-called conversions and the so-called Christian lives of men and women and boys and girls.

[31 : 09] The old must go. Remember the immortal words of Thomas Chalmers. What is a gospel? What is it? It is the expulsive power of a new affection.

Where Christ comes other things must go. The old must go. As Paul himself said if any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creation.

All things have passed away. All things have become new. And I say this to you with all the authority of the word of God behind me. If you are a Christian you must look back on a bonfire in your life.

And if you are a Christian there must be a bonfire in your life every day. It's always a case of giving up that we may come to the Lord Jesus.

Always a case of renouncing the old as we come to the new. Always a case of burning, turning your back on.

[32 : 17] And I fear my friend that there is enough burning of the old in your life and mine. Do you know why? It demands too much that's why. It lays too much of the emphasis on the denial of self.

And that seemingly isn't a part of the Christianity of 1985. And it's not 1985 that it's going to suffer because of that.

It's 1995 and the beginning of next century. Because the weaker you make Christianity today, the weaker the church of tomorrow is going to be.

And if you weaken the church of tomorrow, the devil will be in there and he'll sweep the church of our moorings. And that's why I fear that a lot that goes under the guise of Christianity comes from no other source but the pit.

The pit as I said earlier, the devil is out to weaken you and me. And anything that weakens isn't from the Lord, it's from him.

[33 : 34] And I plead with you here tonight, young and old, but particularly the young Christians, I plead with you. Jettison as much as you can from your life.

Go out and get rid of whatever it is that stands between you and a full-scale commitment of your life to the Lord Jesus Christ.

you can start with your books, with your literature, with your texts, with your records. Start with these things. Anything that doesn't improve and strengthen your Christianity is a hindrance to you in

your life.

I may be accused of my life may be accused of preaching what some people call today the heavy gospel, of being hardliners, of not moving with the times, so be it, so be it, as long as we move with the Bible.

That's what's important. Not the times, not the views of others, but the Bible. And I would rather have ten committed, dedicated believers who have had bonfires in their lives than a hundred who carry with them the old into what is supposed to be the new.

[35 : 08] There was the evidence of the gospel's confrontation with darkness in Ephesus. And the more the light of the gospel shone into the dark, the more the darkness opposed it, and the more the gospel triumphed.

The word of the Lord prevailed. The word of the Lord grew mightily, and it lasted. It was a deep-seated, rooted deeply, a deep-seated revival in the lives of the Ephesians.

which leads me to the fourth and final picture. What a picture. What a picture. You see, when this happened in Ephesus, and you know, the more I read the book of Acts, the more I'm convinced that some of our left-wing union leaders have become acquainted with the book of Acts in the past two or three years.

The more I read it. You know, here was this man Demetrius, we'll call him the general secretary of the union of the silversmiths in Ephesus, and he calls a general assembly, he calls an assembly of all the delegates.

What happens is that everyone comes to this assembly, particularly the delegates representing the various branches of the silversmiths, the union of the silversmiths, and he gets up and he's a great orator, this fellow, and he's good at using half-truths, you see, most orators are.

[36 : 44] There's so much of the truth in what he's saying, but this isn't all the truth, and it's very difficult to stand up against men like that. Listen to what he says, you fellows do you not realise what's happening? What do we depend on?

We depend for our bread and butter on the worship of Diana. That's the Latin word for the Greek god Artemis, the goddess Artemis in Ephesus.

He says, do you realise what's happening here? we worship Diana. We're here producing shrines and images and various things connected with the worship of Diana.

Do you see what's happening to us? He says, this man, Paul, he's come in here, and he's beginning to peace persuading, turning away people, saying that there will be no gods which are made with hands.

And our craft is suffering, our trade is suffering, business is slumping, profits are our way down. Do you realise he says, what's happening to you? You're in danger of losing your job.

[37 : 46] Unemployment is going to soar if this man isn't stopped and this gospel isn't stopped. And there were furious. So you heard the chant went up, the mob violence, and the chant, great is Diana of the Ephesians.

And for two hours, this huge amphitheatre in Ephesus, which could seat, which could hold 25,000 people, is almost aflame.

Mob violence, and the chant. See the picture today? You get someone stood up the people, gather a crowd, get this mob violence thing going, get the chant going.

There you have it, again in Ephesus, as you had it, we saw last weekend, in Athens. Isn't amazing? Nothing new under this cell. And the reason for all this put us on the agenda?

The gospel is hitting our trade. What's the resolution? Protest. Get rid of these fellows. Let's get the gospel out of our hair.

[38 : 57] Otherwise, we're done for. And the Roman judge in the area of the proconsul, the town clerk, he had to step in, and very judiciously, wisely, he got them to calm down.

And he said something very interesting to them. He says, do you realize that these men that you're accusing, do you realize that they're neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess?

He says, these fellows haven't spoken a thing as far as I know about Diana, and they haven't robbed any of the relics or any of the shrines, have they? They couldn't dispute this.

What was he, what was this man putting his finger on? Do you know what he's putting his finger on? that the means that God had used in Ephesus was the preaching of the gospel.

That's what the man was putting his finger on. The reason for all this was the success of the gospel.

[40 : 03] And you know, when people accuse the church of tampering with the liberties of men and women, when you see people getting on their hind legs because the church is protesting against Sabbath desecration, this is enough, this is, this is only interference with our liberties, so they say.

When the church is attacked for any line that it takes in accordance with the Bible, you watch this, always at the heart of the opposition to the church, is a hatred of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It isn't expressed like that, but that's the principle behind it, that's the principle behind it, because you be assured of this, if you love the gospel and if you love Christ, you love all that the church stands for, because the church is the product of the gospel and the hand of the spirit, you be assured of that.

So my friend, as I close here tonight, can it be that the gospel is interfering with your liberty? Can it be that the gospel is maybe, as we say, getting under your skin?

Can it be that these things are beginning to annoy you? You see, you notice this. When the gospel is blessed in the life of an individual, don't you for a moment think that that's going to bring peace into your life?

[41 : 47] You see, what very often happens is this, that your hakes are up. You don't like this. You don't like it. There's a spirit of Demetrius in every natural heart.

Do you know why? Because then you realize that the gospel is going to cost you something. It was costing these men in Ephesus their livelihood because so many people had been converted and turned away from idolatry.

I'm back now to the point that I was probably laboring maybe too much earlier on. Don't you get out. You can't get away from this. the gospel demands that you count the cost.

And it's when you realize what it's going to cost you to commit your life to the Lord, that's when your hakes are up. That's when the spirit of antagonism and opposition wells up within you.

And that's the devil. That's the devil. don't you side with the devil. Rather, you side with those who have been won from the devil for the service of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[43 : 12] The gospel will always expose your darkness and your degeneracy and your degradation. The gospel will always deal with your need of purity and peace and truthfulness and honesty and life.

And the gospel will always come to reform and to conform, to remake. The gospel will interfere with your liberty, with your self-interest, with your opinions, and with your views.

And that is when sin will rise up in your heart. And that is where you have, as I said earlier, the principle of this Demetrius coming in your heart.

But my friend, don't you resist the gospel? It's an awful thing to resist the gospel. Demetrius was successful at this time of getting rid of Paul from Ephesus.

But one day Demetrius and Paul are going to meet again. One day they're going to stand at the judgment seat of Christ. One day Demetrius is going to be asked, what did you do with the gospel that Paul preached at Ephesus?

[44 : 43] And what did Demetrius do with it? He opposed it. Violently, bitterly, with all the antagonism at his disposal.

And God is asking you tonight as the gospel confronts you yet again. He's asking you, what are you doing with this gospel that comes to you?

Are you on the devil's side who doesn't want it at all costs to succeed? Or are you going to align yourself with those who have heard, who have believed, who have received, and who have parted with the old, and made this bonfire, and have taken up the new, not prepared to follow Christ, cost, what it may.

May God grant it. Let us pray. O Lord, we pray for thy blessing and for thy presence. As we stand before thee here tonight, O, do thou help us.

Help us to put our trust in thyself. Bless thy word, and make it glorious in our midst, and grant that we may be caught up in all its blessed progress in our own lives and round about us, forgiving sin for Jesus' sake.

[46 : 17] Amen.